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Debutante: Rites and Regalia of American Debdom

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the University of Nebraska. Lieberman seems to be saying that "prairie power" is a state of mind, but, at the same time, given the schools she chooses to emphasize, "prairie power" appears to occupy a space outside of what the popular media and political pundits have recently called "Blue-State America."

Another of her interview subjects is a native of California and a graduate of Berkeley. Did he become a "prairie populist" because he spent a little time in graduate school at the University of Kansas? Which were his most formative years—the many spent in California, or the few years in Lawrence? In sum, how many activists at the non-elite universities were indigenous, what proportion came from more cosmopolitan locales, and did the "outsiders" bring their values to the hinterlands?

Instead of using terms such as "prairie power," we might better follow David Brooks's lead and refer to "Bobos in Red-State America." If it is difficult today for conservatives to express their views in Manhattan, New York, imagine what it must be like for progressives to hold forth in Manhattan, Kansas.

Debutante: Rites and Regalia of American Debdom, by Karal Ann Marling. Culture America Series. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004. 224 pp. Illustrations, index. \$24.95 cloth.

Reviewer Katherine Jellison is associate professor of history at Ohio University. She is writing a history of American wedding celebrations.

In this study of the formal social debut, art historian and American studies scholar Karal Ann Marling traces the custom from its origin among the East Coast Victorian elite through its popular evolution into the high school proms and Latin American *quinceañeras* of today. The author devotes particular attention to coming-of-age ceremonies in the Midwest, a region largely neglected by scholars in previous histories of American etiquette and high society.

Marling uses a variety of rich sources to investigate debutante culture: newspaper society pages, etiquette books, biographies of famous debutantes, depictions of proms and coming-out parties in novels and motion pictures, and photographs, drawings, programs, and souvenirs from real-life coming-of-age ceremonies. She devotes significant attention to two long-established midwestern celebrations: St. Louis's Veiled Prophet Ball and Kansas City's Jewel Ball. The local elite developed each event to assert leadership and publicize civic pride via elaborate rituals that included the formal presentation of marriageable daughters. By the late 1960s, the civil rights movement, second-

wave feminism, and the counterculture transformed the self-indulgent entertainments. In the Midwest and elsewhere, Jewish and African American families successfully agitated for inclusion, and debutante balls increasingly became fund-raising events for worthy charities.

The traditional coming-out celebration continued to create a variety of spin-off rituals: African American debuts celebrating a young woman's educational and community service accomplishments, *quinceañeras* commemorating a Latina's fifteenth birthday, elaborate high school proms, and glamorous beauty pageants. Although Marling does not always make the connection explicit, these festivities function as dress rehearsals for the formal wedding. Like the original debutante balls and teas, these recent coming-of-age events cast a young single woman in the role of practice bride as she struts or dances to music in a floor-length gown. And like a wedding, the coming-out party and its more democratic imitators are organized by and for women to celebrate traditional gender roles and display the female body in ways that highlight its sexuality. As Marling notes, these are rituals that showcase both the "empowerment of women and their subjugation" (16).

The title of Marling's study is a bit misleading. Although the work's main title spotlights the *Debutante*, the voices of real-life debutantes and other coming-of-age celebrants are largely absent from the study. Marling forgoes oral histories and personal correspondence in favor of sources that explore the book's subtitle: *Rites and Regalia of American Debdom*. In the process, she provides a thorough exploration of the form and content of female coming-of-age celebrations—albeit with little reflection by participants. Written in an informal style, generously illustrated, and lacking footnotes or endnotes, it is readily accessible to a popular as well as an academic audience.

Reinventing the Museum: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on the Paradigm Shift, edited by Gail Anderson. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004. xii, 402 pp. Notes, bibliographies. \$78.00 cloth, \$34.95 paper.

Reviewer Fred E. H. Schroeder was, before his retirement, director of graduate liberal studies at the University of Minnesota, Duluth. His most recent work on local history is *Front Yard America: The Evolution and Meanings of a Vernacular Domestic Landscape* (1993).

Reinventing the Museum is an excellent collection of 34 provocative articles divided into five areas of concern among museums. Each is preceded by a summary by editor Gail Anderson, who has been active in museums for the past 25 years. The "paradigm shift" of the book's

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